THE CITY

ADAPTED BY
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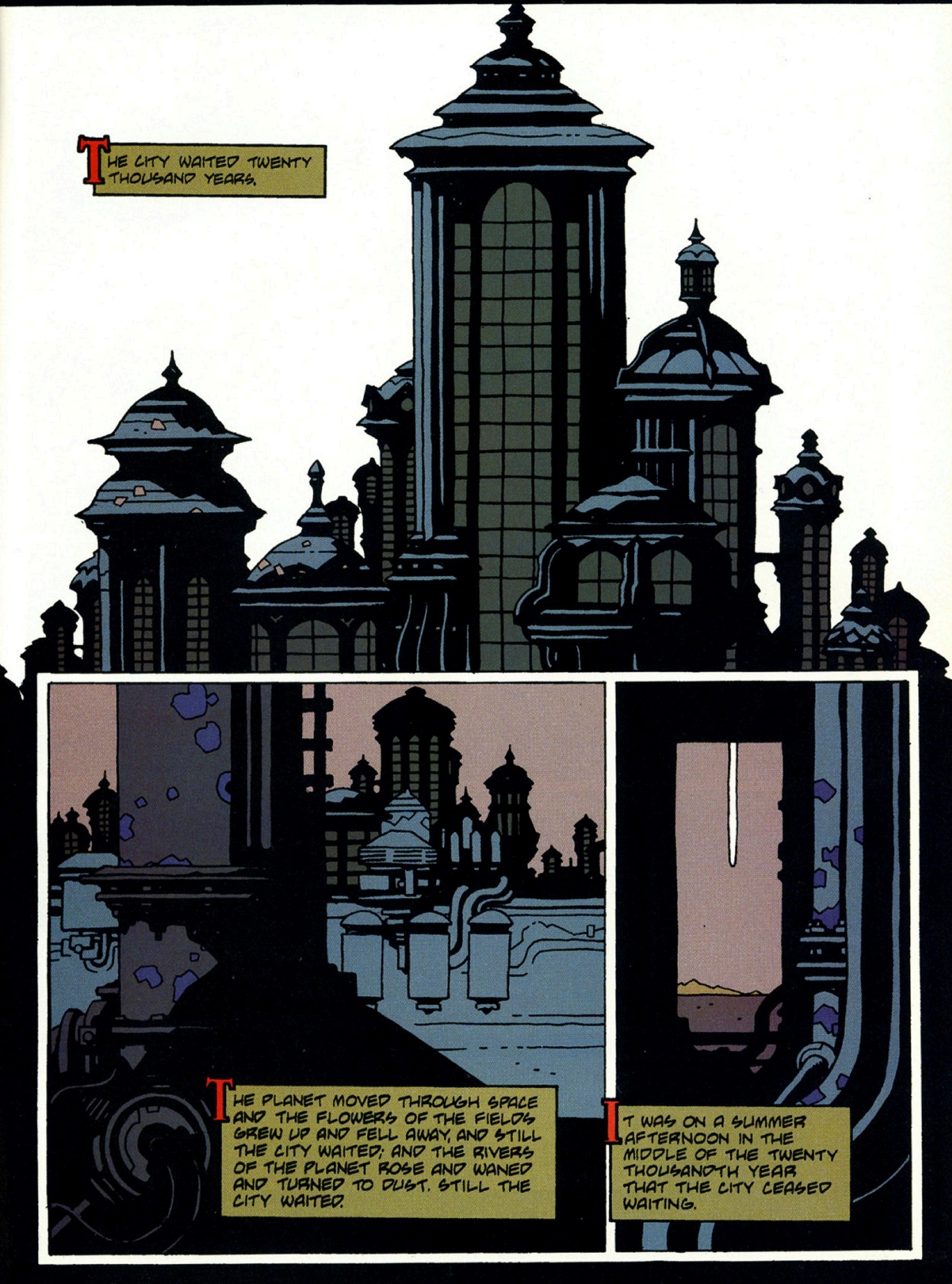

READY?
ALL RIGHT, MEN. CAREFUL! INTO THE CITY. JENSEN, YOU AND HUTCHINSON PATROL AHEAD. KEEP A SHARP EYE.
THE CITY OPENED SECRET NOSTRILS.
FIRE, ODOR, THE SCENT OF A FALLEN METEOR, HOT METAL. A SHIP HAS COME FROM ANOTHER WORLD. THE BRASS SMELL, THE DUSTY FIRE SMELL OF BURNED POWDER, SULPHUR, AND ROCKET BRIMSTONE.
CLICK CHAKK-CHAKK-CHAKK
FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE. NINE MEN!

THE GREAT CITY NOSTRILS DILATED AGAIN.
THE SMELL OF BUTTER. IN THE CITY AIR, FROM THE STALKING MEN, FAINTLY, THE AURA WHICH WAFTED TO THE GREAT NOSE BROKE DOWN INTO MEMORIES OF MILK, CHEESE, ICE CREAM, BUTTER. THE EFFLUVIA OF A DAIRY ECONOMY.
CLICK-CLICK
CAREFUL, MEN!
JONES, GET YOUR GUN OUT. DON'T BE A FOOL!
THE CITY'S DEAD; WHY WORRY?
YOU CAN'T TELL.
NOW, AT THE BARKING TALK THE EARS AWOKE.
THE EARS LISTENED AND THE NOSE SIPHONED UP GREAT CHAMBERS OF ODOR.
CHIKK-CHIKK-CHAKK CLICK
PERSPIRATION: CHLORIDES SUCH-AND-SUCH PERCENT; SULPHATES SO-AND-SO; UREA NITROGEN, THUS: CREATINE, SUGAR, LACTIC ACID...
THERE!
PING PING PING

I THINK WE SHOULD GO BACK TO THE ROCKET, CAPTAIN.
I GIVE THE ORDERS, MR. SMITH.
YES, SIR.
YOU UP THERE! PATROL! SEE ANYTHING?
NOTHING, SIR.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN DEAD A LONG TIME!
YOU SEE, SMITH? NOTHING TO FEAR.
I DON'T LIKE IT. I DON'T KNOW WHY. YOU EVER FEEL YOU'VE SEEN A PLACE BEFORE? WELL, THIS CITY'S TOO FAMILIAR.
NONSENSE. THIS PLANETARY SYSTEM'S BILLIONS OF MILES FROM EARTH; WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY'VE BEEN HERE EVER BEFORE. OURS IS THE ONLY LIGHT-YEAR ROCKET IN EXISTENCE.
THAT'S HOW I FEEL, ANYWAY, SIR...
...I THINK WE SHOULD GET OUT.
THE EAR HEARD AND QUICKENED. ROTORS GLIDED, LIQUIDS GLITTERED IN SMALL CREEKS THROUGH VALVES AND BLOWERS A FORMULA AND A CONCOCTION—ONE FOLLOWED ANOTHER.
SMELL THAT SMITH? Ahh. GREEN GRASS. EVER SMELL ANYTHING BETTER? BY GOD, I JUST LIKE TO STAND HERE AND SMELL IT.
Ahh!
NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT, eh, SMITH? COME ON!
THE EAR AND NOSE RELAXED A BILLIONTH OF A FRACTION. THE COUNTERMOVE HAD SUCCEEDED. THE PAWNS WERE PROCEEDING FORWARD.

NOW THE CLOUDY EYES OF THE CITY MOVED OUT OF FOG AND MIST.
CAPTAIN, THE WINDOWS!
WHAT?
THOSE HOUSE WINDOWS, THERE! I SAW THEM MOVE!
I DIDN'T SEE IT.
THEY SHIFTED. THEY CHANGED COLOR FROM DARK TO LIGHT.
LOOK LIKE ORDINARY SQUARE WINDOWS TO ME.
I TELL YOU, CAPTAIN, IT'S THE WINDOWS!
GET ALONG.
I'M GOING BACK, SIR.
WHAT?
I'M GOING BACK TO THE ROCKET.
MR. SMITH?
I'M NOT FALLING INTO ANY TRAP!
AFRAID OF AN EMPTY CITY.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
GO ON, LAUGH!
WITH A MOVE UNRECOGNIZABLE AS SUCH, THE STREET SETTLED. IT WEIGHED THE INVADERS.
NOW THE CITY WAS FULLY AWAKE.

GET HIM, MEN!
COME BACK, SMITH!
NO, BLAST YOU!
A FINAL TEST.
THESE ARE MEN.
THESE ARE MEN FROM A FAR WORLD, A CERTAIN PLANET, AND THEY HAVE CERTAIN EYES, CERTAIN EARS, AND THEY WALK UPON LEGS IN A SPECIFIED WAY AND CARRY WEAPONS AND THINK AND FIGHT, AND THEY HAVE PARTICULAR HEARTS AND ALL SUCH ORGANS AS ARE RECORDED FROM LONG AGO.

THESE ARE OUR ENEMIES.
SMITH, COME BACK!
THESE ARE THE ONES WE HAVE WAITED FOR TWENTY THOUSAND YEARS TO SEE AGAIN. THESE ARE THE MEN UPON WHOM WE WAITED TO VISIT REVENGE. EVERYTHING TOTALS. THESE ARE THE MEN OF A PLANET CALLED EARTH, WHO DECLARED WAR UPON TAOLLAN TWENTY THOSAND YEARS AGO, WHO KEPT US IN SLAVERY AND RUINED US AND DESTROYED US WITH A GREAT DISEASE. THEN THEY WENT OFF TO LIVE IN ANOTHER GALAXY TO ESCAPE THAT DISEASE WHICH THEY VISITED UPON US AFTER RANSACKING OUR WORLD.
THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT WAR AND THAT TIME, AND THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN US. BUT WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN THEM. THESE ARE OUR ENEMIES.
THIS IS CERTAIN.

OUR WAITING IS DONE.
STOP!
BLAM
THAT FOOL! AFRAID OF A CITY!
LISTEN TO ME. I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU.

I AM NO LONGER YOUR CAPTAIN. NOR AM I A MAN.
I AM THE CITY.
I'VE WAITED TWO HUNDRED CENTURIES. I'VE WAITED FOR THE SONS OF THE SONS TO RETURN.
CAPTAIN, SIR!
LET ME CONTINUE. WHO BUILT ME? THE CITY. THE MEN WHO DIED BUILT ME. THE OLD RACE WHO ONCE LIVED HERE. THE PEOPLE WHOM THE EARTH MEN LEFT TO DIE OF A TERRIBLE DISEASE, WITH NO CURE.
AND THE MEN OF THAT OLD RACE, DREAMING OF THE DAY WHEN EARTH MEN MIGHT RETURN, BUILT THIS CITY, AND THE NAME OF THIS CITY WAS AND IS REVENGE, UPON THE PLANET OF DARKNESS, NEAR THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF CENTURIES BY THE MOUNTAINS OF THE DEAD.
AT LONG LAST, YOU'VE COME! THOSE MEN HAVE BEEN DEAD TWO HUNDRED CENTURIES, BUT THEY LEFT A CITY HERE TO WELCOME YOU.
CAPTAIN, SIR, YOU'RE NOT FEELING WELL. PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER COME BACK TO THE SHIP, SIR.

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SMITH?
HERE!
JENSEN?
HERE!
JONES, HUTCHINSON, SPRINGER?
HERE! HERE! HERE!
WE RETURN TO EARTH IMMEDIATELY.
YES, SIR!
ON THE DOUBLE!
THESE ARE TO BE DROPPDED ON EARTH.
RIGHT, SIR!
NINE MEN HURRIED THE GOLDEN BOMBS OF DISEASE CULTURE INTO THE ROCKET.
SLOWLY, PLEASURABLY, THE CITY ENJOYED THE LUXURY OF DYING.